

Ep 211. Navigating a Faith Crisis with Amanda Voelker



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Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 211, Navigating a Faith Crisis with Amanda Voelker.

This podcast is for people who know that living an extraordinary life is not easy or comfortable. It's so much better than that. This is *Better Than Happy*, and I'm your host, Jody Moore.

Hey, everyone, welcome to episode 211. I want to begin by reminding you to go get your ticket to *Better Than Happy* Live if you want to come hang out with me in September at Thanksgiving Point. We're going to spend the day together and I'm going to teach you some of the concepts you've learned here on the podcast in depth, and then we are going to do some live coaching.

So, come and get coaching or come and listen to coaching, especially if you've never heard coaching. I really want you to experience, just take in what you've learned here, but 10Xing the application of it in your life. So, go to jodymoore.com, click on live events. I'm recording this a little bit in advance so I don't even know if there are tickets left, but go check it out. I'd love to hang out with you.

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Jody: So, today on my podcast, I have a special guest named Amanda Voelker. And she is not only a special guest but she is my sister-in-law. Say hi, Amanda.

Amanda: Hi.

Jody: So, I'm so thrilled to have her here. I'm going to tell you guys just a little bit about Amanda, then I'm going to let her really introduce herself. She'll do a better job than me, I'm sure. So, Amanda is my husband's youngest sibling. How old was Jake when you were born, by the way?

Amanda: He was almost – I guess 11 and a half.

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Jody: So he was the youngest. He was the baby, and then along came Amanda. Although she was planned.

Amanda: I was. I know a lot of people like to make the joke of, “Oh, you were a surprise...” as if 10 fertility treatment rounds could be a surprise. That was me.

Jody: Right, she was not an accident. And anyway, she and my husband are very close, I know, growing up were good friends. And I have so much respect for Amanda for several reasons. First of all, she’s so much fun and has such a good heart, but also, Amanda and her husband live overseas and have lived in many different countries.

Amanda: Well, we’ve lived in many two different countries.

Jody: Two is a lot to someone who has – did I tell you this, I got my passport picture taken; first time I will ever have a passport, Amanda.

Amanda: That’s pretty amazing.

Jody: So, you’ve lived in many countries to me. But right now, she lives in Shanghai and has two little kids and she just leads a pretty amazing life, I’ve got to say.

Amanda: Thanks, Jody, likewise to you.

Jody: Thank you, thank you – different kind of amazing, right, like the non-passport kind, the more sheltered kind, if you will. Okay, so Amanda is here today because she has really been studying this topic of faith crisis. So, Amanda, why don’t you tell us a little bit about, first of all, your position in the church, how you kind of got into studying this subject, and why we’re going to be talking about it today.

Amanda: Sure, thanks, Jody. So, about two and a half years ago, I was called to be Relief Society President in our little branch in Shanghai. And it was just a small branch of expats. We’re actually not allowed to even talk to Chinese people, even members of the church, about the church in China.

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So it's just expats. I mean, it's overwhelming, I think, anyway but it was my first leadership calling in the church and it was scary. But I had about 40 women in our congregation and within the first week, it was so clear to me that pretty much everyone was struggling. And it wasn't a lot of the same needs we have in the states where we have a big ward and welfare and things like that. These were all spiritual needs. And there were people with just a lot of questions and really, really struggling.

And so I talked with a lot of these women and while there were a lot of topics I was familiar with and had done research myself and maybe struggled with some, I hadn't really seen that depth of struggle, and almost suffering, in a lot of these women. I mean, this was something that they felt their very bedrock and foundation was getting pulled out from under them and it was a really scary feeling for them. But what was so interesting to me is as we talked and as we all prayed and continued to seek about it was that more than anything, I didn't feel afraid for these women; what I felt was that I was on hallowed ground and witnessing something transformative in each of them and something really important that from the outside looked like a big old mess.

And clearly, there was some danger of falling away and of losing testimonies, but that it was so just clear to me that there was something going on that if they were able to work through this, they would be at this new level and a level that so many of us were just not at. And so being able to witness that, I started doing whatever research I could. And there's a few books within the church by church members and then I started researching a lot elsewhere and I just really became fascinated with this idea of faith transformation and the different stages of faith and also seeing it as not something that resonates with all of us.

Because we have all either ourselves or witnessed someone who's really struggled – I know you coach a lot on this – really struggled with different elements of the church or who have left the church, but to have the insight that this was something so – at least potentially – so positive made me recognize that I think, for me, this is a topic that I just wanted to spend a lot

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of time talking to women about, and men, and just researching more. So I spoke on this at Women's Conference in Shanghai and also Asia Women's Conference, and then also I'm working on a book right now.

Jody: Yay, we'll have you come back on when the book is ready. No pressure, but if you could give us a date before you leave, that would be great. Okay, so before we have you unpack what you learned in your studies and in your experiences working with individuals, what do you think – and I know it's different for everybody and we can't just stereotype, but do you think that there are certain things that are triggering? Because it feels to me like we're seeing more people go through this experience now than at least what I recall when I was growing up, or maybe I just wasn't aware of it. Maybe people didn't share it.

But do you think that there are particular events for these women in your experience? Is it the things we're learning about church history or is it more just – I love that you say you were on hallowed ground and that there's the potential to actually come out the other side of this stronger and more spiritual than you were before. Sometimes I wonder if it's an evolution in an increased consciousness that we're seeing overall as a community or do you find particular things are triggering it for people?

Amanda: So, I think it's a combination. I do think that there is this overall movement within our society too, not just within the church, of just not being satisfied, or at least just questioning and looking at the status quo and saying, "Okay, I understand how this was helpful and served me, but how can we kind of uplevel this?" And so I do think that there is a movement towards a more universal picture of the church. And I think that you're right, there is...

Jody: Sort of a collective...

Amanda: I do, I do think that there is just – you get that feeling that people are less and less satisfied with how things are because they see potential for more. And then I do think that there are also those triggers. I think there are – like, women's issues is a huge thing. So patriarchy in the church is

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huge. Yes, past things are challenging, the more things we're learning about prophets as history's coming out can be challenging for a lot of people. The priesthood ban, the temple priesthood ban, especially for my friends who are black and think, if I would have been alive during that time, I couldn't have married my husband who's white in the temple.

Jody: Issues around same sex attraction...

Amanda: Issues around same sex attraction are huge. And so I think it is this combination. I think, for me, it's really exciting. I know that there's a lot of fear because when you look at some of the statistics out, like losing close to 50% of our YSAs and we see so many people just distancing themselves from the church. So that seems scary and I know it's easy to think that it's the world getting more wicked and more secular and all of that. But what I see is I see it as this fantastic chance to rethink things and to move forward. I think that that our heavenly parents have more planned for us and that this unrest is a sign of that.

Jody: Nice, okay, so tell us a little bit, Amanda, if you would, unpack what you have talked to me about in terms of the stages of growth – I don't know if you call them growth stages or maturity in your faith. How do you describe it?

Amanda: Sure, so this is something that I'm really grateful – more and more people are becoming familiar with this idea of faith transition in different stages. I know we have several people within the church, especially Thomas McConkie wrote a fabulous book on this and he's been...

Jody: I love his work.

Amanda: It's wonderful. And then also James Fowler, who is not a member of the church but was kind of one of the pioneering, at least in the 20th century, about looking at adult development and how that might correlate with stages of faith.

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Jody: Which I think – sorry to interrupt you, but I did go through an elementary education program in one of the many Master’s degree programs I’ve pursued, until I remembered I don’t really like kids that much. But at any rate, there’s all kinds of classes and I remember, even just my traditional psychology classes in college, learning about child development. And it’s only been recently that I’ve personally been exposed to these theories on adult development. And it makes sense to me that we wouldn’t just become age 22 or something and stop developing.

Amanda: Aren’t you grateful? When I look back to how – even a few years ago – my maturity at dealing with certain situations, I would like to think...

Jody: You were really immature back then... I’m kidding.

Amanda: But I mean, right, with the current – with a lot of what we view within the church and just within society – it’s not just within our church. This is really pretty standard throughout organized religion. We assume that what we knew at eight, what we believed at eight or as teenagers is going to be the same throughout our lives, which makes no sense because we teach children in absolutes, but nothing in this life is absolute.

There is usually not the right choice and the wrong choice. Sure, sometimes, but usually it’s just everything in life is more complicated, so why wouldn’t eternal things be more complicated than we think in a primary song. So, when I look at it, while I love these different approaches, they can get a little bit confusing. And so for my analogy of this, what I have come up with is one that is kind of cheesy and one that is a little on the nose and imperfect, as all analogies are, but it’s that of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly.

So with our caterpillar stage we have our foundational faith stage, and this starts when we’re like – we kind of get solidified into that caterpillar stage when we’re early adolescents. And actually, most people stay there. They stay there. So the primary difference between this and the further stages is that the authority for your faith kind of exists outside of yourself. So this has

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nothing to do with whether or not you've had spiritual experiences because you absolutely have.

You've had spiritual experiences. You can say, like, I felt the spirit. I have a testimony of these things. But a lot of times, people in this stage – and you'll hear this a lot – are like, I know the church is true, I know all of these things. Everyone knows at this stage.

Jody: Would you describe this as kind of the more authoritative subservient type stage where it's like somebody tells me what to do and it's very prescriptive and we tend to be literal about our translations?

Amanda: Yes.

Jody: And please know that I know both Amanda and myself are not describing this in a judgmental way when we say that most people never leave this stage. I think it serves a lot of people really well.

Amanda: It does, and so you look at the structure we have within the church. So many people being told – not that they're blindly obeying – but being told kind of specific guidelines for their life is really helpful, especially if the circumstances in your life just kind of go well and all of that serves you. And the point of religion, the point of this church is to bring us closer to Christ and to help our brothers and sisters come closer to Christ. And for a lot of people, that works within this very structured framework.

But still, it still is a somewhat unexamined faith. It doesn't mean you don't think about it, but you take things at face value and kind of take them on faith; whatever your parents taught you, what your teachers taught you, what is in the lesson manuals, that's what it is. But at some point, for some people, that becomes unsatisfactory.

So there can be – sometimes it's a question, sometimes it's a crisis where a loved one is sick and they should be getting better but they're not, you know. They've had blessings that said they'll get better and they don't get better. Or it can be issues with church history or women's issues, whatever

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the case, there can be something that starts to not resonate with what you've been taught up to this point. It just doesn't fit.

And there are two things that generally happen if you stay in this caterpillar stage. Some people do. So they fight against that new stuff and put it on the shelf, "Don't worry about that, put it on the shelf." And sometimes, that works for a time, but you can only fit so many things up on that shelf before the shelf breaks. And if that happens and you haven't made any progress forward, that's when we see everything just falls and they just leave because everything falls away. They just can't handle it anymore.

So that's the first option if you try and stay in this caterpillar phase but something's propelling you forward. So then, if you're able to move forward, the next stage is that when you're in a chrysalis. And that is what we often refer to as the faith crisis stage. So it's a transitional phase. Hopefully you're not there for your whole life. You can be, but hopefully not. But it's transitional, but it has to happen before you can kind of move on. And so it's a challenging stage.

And what happens in this is that the authority that before you'd kind of given to other people begins to rest within you. So you start moving that back to ultimately where it belongs within yourself. And so that's when you'll have friends or yourself, when you start using your logic to kind of intellectualize things in the church. Like, "This doesn't make sense to me. I'm really struggling with this. You say this, but here I read this other thing on the internet that says that."

So you hear a lot of that type of talk, which can be scary for people witnessing it. But what's happening is that we're trying to use the faculties that we have to reorganize everything within our faith life. And so just like a butterfly or just like a chrysalis, there is a lot going on. Like, you think of what's happening in that chrysalis stage and you go from this fat caterpillar body to this delicate body that can fly. But what has to happen is a lot of – I mean, limbs have to fall off and fat is shed and all of these things happen in this time.

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Jody: Well, and I love this analogy because – I don't use as much scientific terminology as you do, even the word chrysalis, I'm like, I think I know what she means. But I know that within that cocoon is this icky gooey sticky pile of mush. And you feel like this icky gooey sticky pile of mush. I always use this analogy just to talk about change in general, but certainly with regards to your faith and everything you've believed about where you come from and where you're going and why you exist, I can only imagine you feel like a pile of mush. But that pile of mush contains all of the DNA necessary to create that butterfly. And I think that's what you're describing, that within this fragile and painful stage is the opportunity to really evolve in this way.

Amanda: Absolutely, and you'll notice too with the chrysalis though, it's always hanging onto something. It doesn't just...

Jody: Float around in the air...

Amanda: And so it's tethered, and that is where the kind of key to making it through this comes. So when you're in this faith crisis stage that a lot of people like to refer to as a transition, which is what it is. But I keep the word faith crisis because that is what it feels like. You do, you feel like this big pile of mush that just can't figure out what is happening. It's a mixed-up story. But if you're able to stay tethered to – and I'm going to make this very specific – not to everything, because things are going to have to change in your understanding, but keep tethered to the one place that we're supposed to place our faith or the one person we're supposed to place our faith in, who is Jesus Christ, we tether ourselves to him, and for me, to the understanding that I am a child of God.

And if you can stay tethered to that and recognize that throughout this whole process, they're with you – like, they're with you through it. So even if you are feeling like there is no way out and it's just darkness and body parts all over the place...

Jody: Yeah, and the people in your life may not understand it and maybe offering things that are not helpful with the best of intention but yeah, you shed everything, to your point, other than your connection to God and

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Jesus Christ. And I'm wondering too, and you have much more experience of this than me so I'd love to hear your opinion, but I feel like for some people in this situation, even talking or thinking about Heavenly Father or Jesus Christ in that way because they associate it with everything else painful in their lives, this is where I see people start to rename a higher power of some source. Do you think it matters? Jesus Christ, he lived on Earth. We know about his life. We know his name. But do you think to stay tethered that there is a higher source that loves you, is that enough?

Amanda: So do you mean is it enough to rename that source? I'm confused by the question.

Jody: Yeah, I just feel like there are – and like I said, this is only my very limited exposure to a handful of people going through this, but it's almost like they even reject the term God.

Amanda: I can understand that because I actually have gone through something – I went through something similar. I felt like I had this chance to kind of experience in fast motion what a lot of the sisters I was working with did. And it was the worst, like, four months of my life. It was so hard and I felt that my relationship – I didn't doubt that there was something more and I didn't doubt that there was a Heavenly Father or Christ, but everything that I had held as just fact in that relationship kind of fell out the window for a bit.

And I had to turn to them or turn to it and say, "I'm at a loss right now because all of this is falling apart and I really don't know what to believe." But I do think that that's enough if you are still recognizing that there's something more because for me, for now personally – and I don't know if you want this in or not, but for me, I use the term God a lot more than I do even Heavenly Father now because God, for me, kind of incorporates heavenly parents.

And that was something that came through my own personal really intense faith crisis because what I had encountered with my prayers felt flat. Everything just felt empty until I was willing to take a look – not throw it all

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away, but allow for that higher power, allow for our father in heaven or for Christ or whoever was going to help me that was not something else on this Earth to reorganize for me so that I could understand more.

Jody: Which I think is so powerful because we – like, our idea of who God is, is so limited by our human experience and I think it's highly impacted by your relationship with your father or authority figures in your life. And if you had an amazing father, maybe that helps, and if you didn't, that could be problematic. But to recognize either way that, at some point, shedding that idea, like, not putting god in this box that we've created which feels so safe, that it is the way to really allow him to reveal himself to you and to really develop that connection, like you say, that internal guide rather than the constantly external literal interpretation of scripture and everything and to have that internal source.

I feel like our leaders are trying to take us in that direction. I can only imagine what it must be like to try to lead an international church that's serving such diverse populations of people and to try to provide counsel. There is no way that they can tell us all the things we should do.

Amanda: And that's something that makes this stage really scary for the person in it because you start recognizing that you might be the exception in certain places. And it really ends up being between you and god. You don't have someone else you can really ask or test it against. You have to trust that the spirit, the witness that you're feeling is right. But we're supposed to become like our heavenly parents and I don't think that they were hand-held through their whole experience. So we do have to be able to be willing to let go of those things that feel the most safe and find something more.

And so a lot of that reorganization happens within this transitional phase, this stage when we're in the cocoon or the chrysalis. But then, what happens if we continue in it for long enough and we're able to stick with it is that what we emerge as is something completely different than where we were before. And it's a much more resilient faith because, as a caterpillar,

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it's stable as long as you kind of don't question anything, so it's really stable and that's why a lot of people can stay because a lot of people, their relationship with god is good enough in the structures that we're given. But then if we're able to go through this transitional phase where it does – it's finding that balance between questioning everything and letting God help you.

Because the problem, if we become untethered in this chrysalis stage and just rely on ourselves, that's denying all of those experiences that we've had that have transcended logic and that have connected us with the divine. And so then when we're able to make it into this butterfly stage, which what I want people to realize is that generally we're never all butterflies or all caterpillars. This is usually over the course of time, we continue to evolve.

Jody: I think that's an excellent point and it's not to say, like you said, that there's such a linear process. And there may be parts of your faith where you're further along developmentally than others.

Amanda: And one of the reasons I use this analogy is that I just, more than anything – maybe not more than anything – but I think it's so important to recognize that you can't go back. And so just similar to a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, they can't halfway through decide, "Never mind..."

And so in this process there is potential. There's potential and there's potential for growth and there's also potential for catastrophic failure. And so we have to be willing to put in, yes, the effort, but also be willing to nurture those sources that are really going to help us.

Jody: What would you recommend, Amanda, to anybody listening to this who has a loved one going through a faith crisis? Maybe it's not them themselves, but their spouse or one of their children or somebody is going through it?

Amanda: Well, first of all, I can recognize that that is a really trying place to be and it's a really scary place to be because I think that, for those of us

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within the church, we do believe that this is the best place for everyone. We want people to be happy and we truly believe that it is within this church. And when someone questions that, we're worried about not just them in this life, but we're worried about what's going to happen, like are they going to be a part of our family still or what's going to happen with them. And that's really scary.

But I think that my best advice, besides love them – and here's an example of where you might have to self-reflect and understand if how you're loving them now maybe needs to be adjusted. You might have to find a new way to love them that is supportive of them now. And I think that also to listen.

One of the biggest problems – so I had a really close friend who went through a pretty significant faith crisis and at this point has actually chosen to step away from the church. But when I talked to her, she had been wrestling with these questions for five or six years. And we talked about it and I said, "Hey, why don't you send me your questions." And she said that I was the first person that was willing to listen to her because everyone else was so worried that it would shake their testimony or damage them or they didn't want to hear anti-Mormon literature or any of that.

But what I want to express to people whose loved ones are struggling, you don't need to fear helping someone. If you remember that your companion in this and their companion in this is god, you don't need to be afraid. You don't need to be afraid of history. You don't need to be afraid of men. You don't need to be afraid of social policies because if you're able to stay in that most powerful partnership, you're going to be okay and they're going to be okay.

And so I think that being able to listen and not be defensive, because they might be in the path – if they're in this crisis stage where a lot of times we're dissecting everything in that phase and it can be a little bit much. And I remember my parents talking a lot about people intellectualizing themselves out of the church...

Jody: Yes.

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Amanda: You know, like, “They’re focusing on the wrong things.” For that person right now, it is the only thing. And what we can do is listen because if they’re able to process that in a safe space from love, if they can feel Christ’s love through us in this time, they’re probably going to be more likely to find maybe not an answer, but peace or insight or more clarity if we’re able to support. But if we’re not, they’re going to more fully feel that there is no place in the church for them.

Jody: One of the things I try to point out when I’m coaching an individual who’s got a loved one – I’ve coached a lot of people in this situation, and it’s a crisis for them as well; a different type of crisis that they start experiencing. But what I show them is that they think that they’re struggling so much because the person they love has left the church. But what I show them is you’re struggling because, in some ways with regards to them, you’ve left the church. In other words, you’re not practicing what you believe, which is Christ-like love, which is opening your heart, and to your point, being genuinely curious.

Amanda: That’s really powerful.

Jody: Like, all the fear, the judgment, the worry, all of that, the defensiveness, none of that is part of our doctrine. That’s not what Christ demonstrated. So I tell them that’s the reason you’re struggling, because of who you are by default becoming. And when you can instead stay in the church, keep practicing your religion, this is the time when we really get to decide what do I believe in, who do I want to be? Can I actually live this religion now? It’s a lot easier to do when everything’s going smoothly.

Amanda: And if you were able to do that, then similar to that completely transformed faith, you will have that transformation as well. You’ll have an increase of Christ-like love and that will help you then continue to support your loved one, regardless of where they are.

Jody: And you tell them we’ll carry you through. Like, you don’t have to do it all on your own. You can hand it over to Christ, but you have to stay in

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alignment with who you want to be religiously and what your values are. And I know it's not easy to do either, by the way.

Amanda: No, it's not, but I do think that one thing that's helpful at least intellectually to try and understand when you are the one supporting a loved one is, while it is scary to see that, honestly, I get a little bit excited by how many people I see that are, again, not questioning God, because there's a difference – there's questioning the existence of God, there's questioning that this is really Christ's church, and there's questioning what you think you know about God and what you think you know about Prophets and what you think you know about all of this. Because what it becomes is then self-exploration and allowing God to kind of transform you, which is still keeping God as your companion, which is a powerful thing.

And so when I look at people who are going through this transformative process, there is always the risk that they'll leave. But if they continue, think of how much fuller our church is because of people who think differently than us. Think of how much fuller and more inclusive – and a lot of times, people who do go through this process, that Christ-like love that you talked about, just that is what expands. Maybe their questions never get answered, but they become so much closer to God that they just radiate.

And so we want those people even if it's kind of challenging to us because they question our worldview, even if they're the person in relief society who says things that make you a little bit uncomfortable, we want them there because first of all, we're all worthy to be loved by Christ, but also, this church, if we want it to be for everyone, we have to allow everyone to stay in it. Not everyone will look at it exactly the same.

Jody: That's an excellent point. I feel like our church and our leadership and the way that we are as a community and as a culture of people, I feel like we are on the cusp of evolving to the next version of us, which is always a painful and scary process, but exciting at the same time. I think about the children of Israel who were living the Law of Moses and, like, talk about a caterpillar, right? And I can only imagine, like, over the ages as

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we've evolved, what that is like for people to go to that next level and to think, "No, this is the right way. This is what we've been taught." But the lord kind of provides us those opportunities to get a little bit further a glimpse and to become a little bit more spiritually mature. And I think it's exciting to get to be a part of that.

Amanda: I think it is too and I look at what our leaders are telling us – I mean, it was such a clear example to me of this shift when President Nelson was sustained as the prophet and you had these really – patriotic is not the right word but kind of – talks about like, follow the prophet. And what he talked about was receiving your own witness and personal revelation.

And so what our leader is telling is us yes to follow him, but his counsel is for us to listen to ourselves and to develop that internal voice and to develop our own authority in spiritual things. And what that means is that sometimes we might have insight that is different than mainstream church. Sometimes it might be insight that no one else in the world has. Like, we have the access or we have the potential to commune with deity. And if that only exists with what is within the cannon of the church, we're really limiting ourselves.

And while I think that that is one of the most exciting things as you see more people still living worthily within the church and still supporting one another and following the prophet but also becoming their own authority, choosing this faith, not because someone told them, not because their family did it, but choosing that they are going to be in this community, good and bad, because they want to be like Jesus and they want to help their brothers and sisters. And that is such an exciting thing.

Jody: And I just want to echo that, for some people, it takes a diversion from the path to be able to make that choice. And I don't know how many times I'm, again, telling mothers who are worried about their kids that, for whatever reason, your child needs to be on this path right now and that your job is to love them and put your faith in the lord.

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Amanda: Absolutely and I know, speaking from personal experience, there have been times when I have gone in a completely opposite direction. And sometimes it's been thinking I was doing the right things. Sometimes it hasn't been. But I've never been more than a cry for help away from God, from heavenly parents, from my savior. And it does, sometimes it takes time and it takes a path, but we have no idea the ways in which the Lord is working in people's lives and all paths lead to him, but we don't actually see the end from the beginning, but he does.

And one of the things that I have come to believe more than almost anything is in just the extreme goodness and mercy of god and the fact that most of us, even the ones we think are falling off the path, are doing better than we think and that, ultimately, things are going to be okay. It might look different than what we think okay means, but I think that if we can, like you said, really focus on keeping our covenants, which more than anything is loving the way Christ loves, that as a church, we're going to be able to grow and evolve and support one another through these different transformations.

Jody: I love it. Thank you so much, Amanda for sharing your wisdom. We will have you come back when your book's ready. You did mention Thomas McConkie's book, which I have not read but I have listened to him quite a bit.

Amanda: It's excellent, Navigating the Mormon Faith Crisis.

Jody: Navigating the Mormon Faith Crisis. I'm a big fan of his and he, just by way of reference, did leave the church. He is a descendent of Bruce R. McConkie and Joseph B. Wirthlin and left the church for many years and later on returned.

Amanda: His book really explores in more depth what adult development looks like, stages of adult development and then how that relates to faith. And so it's excellent.

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Jody: It's really, I think, helpful to calm you, especially if you have somebody else going through it, just to kind of illustrate that, you're saying this is a developmental process for some people, not necessarily a tragedy to worry about.

Amanda: Right, and just remember that every – sorry, this is off-track, but like you said, anything in life where there is growth, there's a crisis, there's discomfort that's equivalent to that amount of growth. And so when we are transforming the way that we approach God, that is some major growth and major pain. Because you look at, from the time we're born, we're conditioned – and I know you work a lot about this – with just patterns of thought and behavior.

And from that time, we don't start our spiritual journey as a blank slate. We start it as a conditioned individual. And a big part of this process is deconditioning. And that does feel like completely stripping ourselves bare. And so it is a really painful process, but when you come back, you're not only coming back as something transformed and with a broader view, but you're bringing back, to the church and the world, something that we desperately need.

Jody: I love it. Okay, well next time you come back, I expect that you'll have lived in a lot more countries.

Amanda: I've learned a lot more languages, okay.

Jody: Okay, sounds great, alright, thank you, bye-bye.

If you have a question about something you've heard me talk about on this podcast or anything else going on in your life, I want to invite you to a free public call, Ask Jody Anything. I will teach you the main coaching tool I use with all of my clients and the way to solve any problem in your life, and we will plug in real life examples.

Come to the call and ask me a question anonymously or just listen in. Go to jodymoore.com/askjody and register before you miss it. I'll see you there.

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